

**SCAASI at 45:
Reviewing the Past, Evaluating the
Present, and Preparing for the Future**



**Southern Conference on African American
Studies, Incorporated
February 8-10, 2024**

Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites Houston West
25406 Katy Mills Parkway
Katy Mills, TX 77494

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**THANK YOU FOR
ATTENDING!**

**SOUTHERN
CONFERENCE ON
AFRICAN AMERICAN
STUDIES, INCORPORATED**

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Pulitzer Prize winning author Colson Whitehead's novel titled *The Underground Railroad* (2016) will be used to consider how fiction can help generate readers'/listeners' involvement as they learn about historical Events. Teachers must make a concerted effort to inform the next generation of leaders about the painful legacy of slavery.

***Conference Agenda
February 8, 2024***

Onsite Registration **8:00 AM—4:00 PM**

Opening Luncheon **12:30 PM —1:30 PM**

Greetings & Welcome:

Sharron Herron-Williams
Ronald Goodwin, Local Arrangements Chair, SCAASI
Dorie Gilbert, Dean, PVAMU College of Arts and Sciences

Invocation

Lunch Is Served

Introduction of Speaker:

Bertis English

Keynote Address

Amilcar Shabazz,

*Professor of Africana Studies and History
W. E. B. Du Bois
Department of Afro-American Studies
University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Remarks & Conference Updates:

Sharron Herron-Williams

SCAASI at 45:

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Session 1a

The Pin Oak Room

2:00—2:50 PM

Community Histories

Presenters:

Keyona Celestin, “It Haunts Us All: Texas’ Legacy of Racial Violence and the Absence of Memory as Told Through Ghost Stories, 1865-1921”

Andrew Baskin, “Dorothy Mitchell-Kincaid: The Conscience of the 13 Streets of Alcoa, TN”

Steve Miller, “Storytelling and Listening”

Chair: *Sharron Herron-Williams*

Session 1b

The Cane Island Room

2:00—2:50 PM

Black Arts

Presenters:

Kate Wanchi Huang, “Afrofuturist Aesthetics in Forgotten Figures: Viewing Past and Present Chronicles of African Diasporic Cinema, Novels, and Graphic Novels in the Post-Colonial Era”

W. Dena Powell-Muhammad Murphy, “Kinky and Knotless: The History of African American Hair Discrimination in America”

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A significant increase in socioeconomic inequality around MHC access occurred during the study period as well. Policy recommendations to reduce these inequalities and move toward meeting Sustainability Development Goals for maternal and neonatal health in Tanzania are discussed.

Carol Taylor Johnson, Professor, West Virginia State University
“Contested Classroom Spaces: A Climate for Learning in the Midst of Challenges”

ABSTRACT: It is somewhat disconcerting that legislators in certain states have crafted legislation that denounces the efforts of particular classroom teachers who attempt to create a dialectic space in the classroom to interrogate and dismantle the painful legacy of slavery and Jim Crowism that targeted persons of African descent for several centuries. Such topics are a part of American history and culture and cannot be ignored by our educational institutions. Calvin Schermerhorn makes the statement that “racial inequity is part of our national DNA,” in *Unrequited Toil: A History of United States Slavery* (2018). He utilizes historical records, statistics, and content from the compelling slave narrative of Charles Ball (from Maryland) who was snatched from the Upper South and forced to relocate to work on his enslaver’s cotton plantations in the Deep South. Cotton markets flourished through the use of slave labor and capitalism during our nation’s independence through the end of Reconstruction. Multiple studies document how slaves and free blacks, in the midst of forced labor pursued freedom through military service or flight. Documents provide evidence that as persons of African descent are defined as chattel, while white supremacy is manifested through violence, terror, and draconian laws throughout the country.

Historical stories about slavery are on display at our National, State, and community parks throughout the country. In 1998, the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act was passed to provide opportunities for collaboration between organizations, individuals, local, state, and federal entities to locate and preserve the history of enslavement of human beings and their fight for freedom. Students must become knowledgeable of this legacy and learn how to discuss and respond to various components in an informed manner. Using digitized nonfiction primary materials, this study provides evidence of how racist practices evolved during the colonial period up to Reconstruction.

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Session 5b—Levi Jordan Plantation *The Influence of Blackness*

Christopher Knight, Program Director, University of Houston

“The Influence of Pedigree and Piety on the Social Movements of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.”

ABSTRACT: Some scholars posit the existence of an enduring core identity within every individual, which remains relatively unaltered while simultaneously being shaped by our life experiences. Research has indicated that the early family and childhood experiences we undergo often resurface in our adult interactions. These formative years play a pivotal role in how leaders respond to pressure and handle situations where team members vie for their attention or roles. They also influence the nature of the relationship leaders maintain with those they lead, either fostering closeness or distance. Our life experiences, in a sense, create a continuous feedback loop that, in turn molds our moral compass, ethics, and values as human beings. Ultimately, this interplay determines how we engage with and interpret others. Thus, looking at the lives of Martin L. King, Jr. and Malcom X, this paper delves into the impact of one’s pedigree (upbringing) on their perspectives regarding social justice, moral principles, and involvement in social movements.

Neema Langa, Assistant Professor, University of Houston

“Dependency Theory: An Evaluation of Period-Based Changes in Neonatal Mortality and Utilization of Maternal Health care in Tanzania Between 1991-2016”

ABSTRACT: While efforts have been made to increase maternal healthcare (MHC) utilization and decrease neonatal mortality in Tanzania, much remains to be known about the effect of dependency (particularly on reproductive policy changes) on the use of MHC and neonatal health over time among varying socioeconomic groups. This study applied dependency theory to cross-sectional secondary data (collected by the Tanzania Demographic Health Surveys between 1991-2016), the odds of neonatal mortality were still greater in 2016. Also a decline in the recommended skilled delivery assistance and 4+ antenatal care visits occurred in the data period. A significant increase in socioeconomic inequality around MHC access occurred in the data period.

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Alecia D. Hoffman, “The Use of Theoretical Paradigms to Analyze Siddi Political Agency: A Review of the Literature”

Chair: Alecia D. Hoffman

Session 2

Katy and Cane Island Room

3:00—3:50 PM

**Documentary Screening:
*Title of Wiley Documentary***

Moderator/Discussant: Tashia Bradley

Session 3

Katy and Cane Island Room

4:00—4:50 PM

**Documentary Screening:
*Beaumont’s Black History: In Moving Pictures***

Moderator/Discussant: Gordan Williams

OPENING RECEPTION

5:30—6:30PM

DINNER

6:30—8:30 PM

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FEBRUARY 9, 2024

BREAKFAST 7:30—9:00 AM

Words from the Elder,
George Garrison **8:15—8:45 AM**

**Travel to Levi Jordan Plantation
10510 FM, 524 Brazoria, TX 77422 9:00 AM**

BOX LUNCH 12:30—1:30PM

Session 4a 1:30—2:20PM
Levi Jordan Plantation

Black Education

Presenters:

*Carmela Walker and San Antonio African American
Community Archive and Museum (SAAACAM), “The Urban
League’s Advocacy U Program”*

*Ronald Lorenzo, “Mythology versus History: The Narratives
of Earl Gill and Abner Davis, White and Black Texas
College Football Heroes”*

Chair: Ronald Goodwin

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In the post Civil Rights era, critics of Black America routinely cited Black urbanites as the foremost reason for Black suffering. Such flawed analysis grew with Ronald Reagan’s ascension to the Presidency and became a reliable blueprint for aspirant right-leaning politicians and those aspiring to the Supreme Court. It did not matter what the malady was, Black urbanites were blamed for its creation and continuation.

Predictably, the issue of gun violence in urban America was laid at the feet of young Black males whose priorities and values were solely determined by violent rap lyrics that served as the soundtrack of their criminal lives in places like Houston’s Fifth Ward. Rapper Scarface of the Geto Boys not only took significant issue with such analysis and false propaganda, but he also responded, along with Ice Cube, a former member of iconic rap group Niggas Wit Attitudes, to what amounts to an international smear campaign against young Black males.

This paper, “The Hand of the Dead Body: The Blaming of Rap Music for Gun Violence in a Violent Nation,” will examine the issue of American gun violence, its manifestation among Black urbanites, and Scarface’s response to far too common victim blaming.

Session 5a—Levi Jordan Plantation
Black Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction in the South

Bertis English, Professor, Alabama State University
“A Man of Mark: Alexander Haywood Curtis, 1829-1878”

Abel Bartley, Professor, Clemson University
“The Promises We Must Keep: African Americans in Jacksonville,
Florida, during Reconstruction”

Sheena Hayes, Associate Professor, Auburn University
“The Interesting Lives of Booker T. Washington Wives”

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Session 4a—Levi Jordan Plantation *Black Education*

Carmela Walker, Houston Area Urban League and SAAACAM
“The Urban League’s Advocacy U Program”

A Discussion

Session 4b—Levi Jordan Plantation *Fight the Power*

Bequita Pegram, Professor Prairie View A&M University
“Redefining the Andragogy Approach in African-American Studies: Producing Culturally Aware Change Agents”

ABSTRACT: It is no longer enough to teach students the role of African Americans in United States History and test their understanding of the content. Merriam-Webster dictionary defines adulting learning as the art of science of teaching adults. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education” (King, 1947).

As facilitators of knowledge, we must challenge ourselves, the educational system, and students to think more critically and intensively about the role of African Americans in United States History. In this panel discussion, we will discuss how to teach students how to consume history, use history to predict the future, and transfer history into a call to action by breaking down the political, social, and economic impact of the role of African Americans in United States History.

James Jones III, Associate Professor, Prairie View A&M University
“The Hand of the Dead Body: The Blaming of Rap Music for Gun Violence in a Violent Nation”

ABSTRACT: Fifty years ago, Hip-Hop Culture was birthed out of a declining Black Power Era and Black Arts Movement. At its best, rap music, the musical wing of Hip-Hop Culture, was led by politicized emcees dedicated to addressing the increasing suffering of Black urbanites corralled in impoverished areas often devoid of a reasonable amount of hope.

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Session 4b
Levi Jordan Plantation

1:30—2:20 PM

Fight the Power

Presenters:

Bequita Pegram, “Redefining the Andragogy Approach in African-American Studies: Producing Culturally Aware Change Agents”

James Jones III, “The Hand of the Dead Body: The Blaming of Rap Music for Gun Violence in a Violent Nation”

Chair: Bequita Pegram

Session 5a
Levi Jordan Plantation

2:30—3:20 PM

Black Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction in the South

Presenters:

Bertis English, “A Man of Mark: Alexander Haywood Curtis, 1829–1878”

Abel Bartley, “The Promises We Must Keep: African Americans in Jacksonville, Florida During Reconstruction”

Sheena Haynes, “The Interesting Lives of Booker T. Washington Wives”

Chair: Eunice Matthews Armstead

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Session 5b

2:30—3:20 PM

Levi Jordan Plantation

The Influence of Blackness

Presenters:

Christopher Knight, “The Influence of Pedigree and Piety on the Social Movements of Malcom X and Dr. Martin L. King, Jr.”

Neema Langa, “Dependency Theory: An Evaluation of Period-Based Changes in Neonatal Mortality and Utilization of Maternal Health Care in Tanzania Between 1991–2016”

Carol Taylor Johnson, “Contested Classroom Spaces: A Climate for Learning in the Midst of Challenges”

Chair: Tashia Bradley

Leave Levi Jordan Plantation

4:00 PM

SCAASI GENERAL MEETING 5:30—6:30 PM

Opening Remarks: Sharron Herron-Williams
Secretary’s Report: Alecia D. Hoffman
Treasurer’s Report: Bertis English
Griot Report: Tashia Bradley
President’s Report: Sharon Herron-Williams
Other Business
Closing Remarks: Abel Bartley

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Since emancipation, African American’s have styled their hair to embrace their cultural identity, assimilate into American ideals of Appropriateness, visually voice their political views, and further assert their pride in relationship to their Blackness. Finger waves, bantu knots, jheri curls, afros, locs, lace fronts, and braids are all significant to African American people’s cultural expression. Despite their efforts and persistence, this freedom of cultural expression has not been fully protected and thus, African Americans have also suffered from such expressions.

On March 18, 2022, the House of Representatives signed a piece of legislation called the C.R.O.W.N. Act which prohibits race-based hair discrimination. Employers and educational institutions are therefore barred from denying employment or access to educational opportunities to individuals based on their hair. While hair may seem to be of trivial concern in discussions of advancing equity, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), our current anti-discrimination laws are still inadequate for addressing hair bias.

This first draft project aims to use visual materials, scholarly sources, court case documents, and interviews to discuss (1) hair’s importance to African Americans’ identities; (2) the negative impacts of hair/race-based discrimination on African American’s educational and wealth attainment, and (3) the necessity of the C.R.O.W.N. Act as an additional federal Civil Rights protection.

Alecia D. Hoffman, Associate Professor, Alabama State University

“The Use of Theoretical Paradigms to Analyze Sidi Political Agency: A Review of the Literature”

ABSTRACT: Significant populations with direct lineages to Africa reside in Gujarat and Karnataka, India. The most prominent group of Africans in occupy India are the Siddis, who number somewhere between 40,000 and 50,000. The Siddi population has long held a place and space on the Indian subcontinent. Although there has been an increase in studies on the Siddi population in India, minimal studies have embarked on investigations that are grounded in social science theoretical paradigms, particularly those that are germane to the discipline of political science. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the use of rational choice theory, moral agency, and structuralism as paradigms to study the existing literature of the Siddis of India.

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Butler dealt with the subject of fantasy and time travel, in the 70's, to discuss the search for her self-identity in terms of her ancestor's history. The metaphor between times and spaces implies that the Black female protagonist, Dana, is in the status of freedom.

Butler considered that Black history should be elaborated by their own Black community rather than other communities of races, especially the history of trauma that occurred in certain races or communities. Illustrated by Duffy and Jennings, Butler's graphic novel adaptations are infused with Afrofuturist aesthetics from novels to graphic narratives. The history of trauma, self-identity, racial discrimination, and inequity are fully discovered in the novel and graphic narrative.

Contemporary scholarship lacks research on a lineage of significant African American literary works in the perspective of post-colonialism: including Göran Hugo Olsson's *Concerning Violence* (2014) and Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* (1979). Doing so, I argue that colonial nostalgia is not only for the colonizer but also for the colonized; the more colonial figures in literary works are forgotten, the closer relationship the colonizer and the colonized of the post-colonial period are. Therefore, in this paper, I will utilize Afrofuturist cultural studies and Frantz Fanon's post-colonial studies to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of people subordinated under forms of imperialism. Most specifically, I will revisit the aforementioned African American films, literary works, and graphic adaptations and analyze the following shared elements:
(1) Representation of fragmented history and of use of ellipsis;
(2) Cultural conflicts and hybridity.

Therefore, in the paper, I will examine the forms of Future/Past under the scope of post colonization (settler colonization).

W. Denae Powell-Muhammad Murphy, Adjunct Professor, University of Houston

“Kinky and Knotless: The History of African American Hair Discrimination in America”

ABSTRACT: The care and maintenance of African American hair is not just a process of shampoo, condition, and style. It is coupled with community, ambition, desire, freedom, protest, and capitalism. The roots of African American people's hair have been both a place of conflict and space resistance.

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DINNER

6:30 PM—8:00 PM

Awards Presentation

Leonard A. Slade Jr. Poet Laureate Award

C. Calvin Smith—Wali R. Kharif Book Award

FEBRUARY 10, 2024

CLOSING BREAKFAST

9:00—11:00 AM

The Katy and Cane Island Rooms

Remarks:

Wali R. Kharif, Board Member

Sharron Herron-Williams

SCAASI 2025 Convention Announcement

Conference Abstracts

Session 1a—Pin Oak Room *Community Histories*

Keyona Celestin, Student, Prairie View A&M University

“It Haunts Us All: Texas’ Legacy of Racial Violence and the Absence of Memory as Told Through Ghost Stories, 1865–1921”

Andrew Baskin, Professor Emeritus, Berea College

“Dorothy Mitchell-Kincaid: The Conscience of the 13 Streets of Alcoa, TN”

ABSTRACT: The goal of my presentation will be to educate members of SCAASI about the life of Dorothy Mitchell-Kincaid in the predominantly African-American section of Alcoa, Tennessee, known as the 13 Streets. The presentation will be based on interviews with Dorothy, her family, and friends during the last two years of her life in 2017-2019 before she “finally succumbed to the beast” (pancreatic cancer) that had been ravishing her body since 2012.

Dorothy was a “superwoman” whose legacy remains in the 13 Streets. She created the Beloved Community Outreach Foundation, Inc. to assist people in dealing with the financial pain of fighting cancer. In addition, Dorothy and two friends created CDJ Media to record the oral histories of African Americans in Blount County, Tennessee. The interviews are accessible in the Hutchins Library of Berea College and the Blount County Public Library, allowing the participants to “tell their stories.”

Dorothy dealt with the high and low points of her life. No topic was off-limits. She told her story as she lived her life, with honesty, that was sometimes brutal and painful. However, anyone who dealt with Dorothy, friend or foe, would expect nothing less. Attendees will learn how one Black Appalachian woman born in a former company town in a segregated section known as the 13 Streets impacted her family, friends, and communities in the 21st century. She was a fighter. Even pancreatic cancer knows she is a worthy opponent. After her initial diagnosis, doctors told Dorothy she had one year to live. She lived seven. That was Dorothy Mitchell-Kincaid: The Conscience of the 13 Streets.

Funding for this project is provided by the National Association of Black Storytellers (NABS), because of partnerships and funding in part by Mid Atlantic Arts Central Appalachia Living Traditions Program and South Arts as part of the In These Mountains, Central Appalachian Folk Arts and Culture. Attendees will learn how one Black Appalachian woman born in a former company town in a segregated section known as the 13 Streets impacted her family, friends, and communities in the 21st century. They will learn that she was a fighter. Even pancreatic cancer knows she is a worthy opponent. After her initial diagnosis, doctors told Dorothy she had one year to live. She lived seven. That was Dorothy Mitchell-Kincaid: The Conscience of the 13 Streets.

Steve Miller, Independent Researcher

“Storytelling and Listening”

Session 1b—The Cane Room *Black Arts*

Kate Wanchi Huang, Doctoral Candidate, University of California, Riverside

“Afrofuturist Aesthetics in Forgotten Figures: Viewing Past and Present Chronicles of African Diasporic Cinema, Novels, and Graphic Novels in the Post-colonial Era”

ABSTRACT: The paper will focus on the graphic novels written and adapted by John Jennings, who worked with Damian Duffy to publish the graphic novel adaptations of Octavia Estelle Butler’s novel, *Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation* (2017). Octavia Butler, an African American science-fiction writer and a native dweller of Los Angeles, therefore, often depicts life in Los Angeles in the works. Butler elaborates on racism and the history of African American slavery through her presentation of Afrofuturism in the 1979 novel *Kindred*. Starting in 2017, Damian Duffy and John Jennings reinterpreted and compiled the points conveyed by Butler. Butler’s *Kindred* is a masterpiece of Afrofuturism, which storyline occurs in two time periods and two places, Los Angeles in the year of 1976 and Atlanta in the year of 1815.

The history of slavery for African Americans is the trauma and racism for the community, so Butler retrieved her ancestor’s history from African American perspective to depict American history in *Kindred*.